

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****March 5, 2019**

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**SUBJECT: JOINT BOTANIC GARDEN MEMBERSHIP WITH BOTANICAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF TEXAS**

The purpose of this Informal Report is to inform the City Council about an expanded partnership with the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) to provide joint membership services for BRIT and the Fort Worth Botanic Garden.

On November 13, 2018 (M&C G-19244), Council adopted recommendations of the Botanic Garden Task Force including admission fees, membership fees, and non-profit management. As directed, staff will be returning with a final admission fee schedule that incorporates free admission during certain periods prior to the implementation of the fees later this summer. Meanwhile, the membership program will be an essential part of the accessibility options allowing affordable, regular Garden visitation privileges when admission fees are implemented. In addition, it will allow a broad group of constituents of both the Botanic Garden and BRIT to provide support to the mission through membership and enjoy free access to the Japanese Garden.

For many years, the Fort Worth Botanical Society has operated a membership program on behalf of the City allowing admission privileges to the Japanese Garden and reciprocal privileges to visit other gardens. As the Council approved hiring society staff members into city positions at the Garden on March 28, 2017 (M&C G-18978), the Society no longer has the capability to manage a large membership program. Due to that contractual arrangement with the Society, the garden has never had staff or other capabilities needed to successfully operate a membership program.

BRIT has operated a successful membership program for many years and has a very capable, professionally managed team in place to administer it. Additionally, BRIT already provides educational and volunteer support services to the Garden through an agreement creating the GROW Collaborative as authorized in M&C C-28427 (October 10, 2017).

BRIT and city staff will negotiate amendments to the current license agreement for GROW, adding administration of a joint membership program by BRIT. This partnership leverages the strengths of both institutions with the Garden providing outstanding garden venues and a major attraction for visitors and BRIT providing scientific and educational expertise combined with a highly skilled non-profit management staff.

The City will increase license fees to BRIT in an amount equal to a currently budgeted half time office assistant position (not to exceed \$23,260) to supplement staffing for the program. BRIT will receive and manage all revenues.

Annual membership rates will align with those recommended by the Task Force and approved by Council, as follows:

\$50	Individual
\$80	Partner (originally recommended as 2 adults, includes children as an increased benefit)
\$100	Supporter (2 adults and children + 2 guest passes)
\$200	Patron (2 adults and children + 4 guest passes)
\$500	Affiliate (2 adults and children + 6 guest passes)
\$1000	Sustainer (2 adults and children + 8 guest passes)



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After all costs for administering the program are paid, net revenues will be split with the Garden receiving 75% and BRIT receiving 25%. Membership presales will begin as soon as March 9 to take advantage of the marketing opportunity presented by Lanterns in the Garden. The Garden and BRIT look forward to this expanded partnership as a win-win for both institutions following the outstanding successes to date of GROW.

If you have any questions, please contact Richard Zavala, Park & Recreation Department Director at (817) 392-5704 or Susan Alanis, Assistant City Manager at (817) 392-6116.

**David Cooke
City Manager**